

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7203

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E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OGEN, MI, US

SUBJ: DIFFICULTIES IN MALAWI PEACE CORPS OPERATIONS

1. SUMMARY: THERE ARE GROWING INDICATIONS THAT US PEACE CORPS, ALONG WITH OTHER VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS, MAY ENCOUNTER INCREASED DIFFICULTIES OPERATING IN MALAWI. DIFFICUTLY MAY STEM FROM SUSPICION ON PART OF PRESIDENT BANDA THAT VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS HARBOR INTELLIGENCE PERSONNEL. SEVERAL UPCOMING PEACE CORPS MALAWI APPOINTMENTS MAY BE AFFECTED. END SUMMARY.

2. GERAINT RICHARDS, GOM PERMSEC FOR WORKS AND SUPPLIES, IN UTMOST CONFIDENCE PROVIDED FOLLOWING INFORMATION JULY 18:

A. ON INSTRUCTIONS OF PRESIDENT BANDA, HEAD OF GOM CIVIL SERVICE GEORGE JAFU RECENTLY ISSUED "SECRET INSTRUCTION" THAT MINISTRIES WERE TO CUT BACK ON ACCEPTANCES OF FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS FOR GOM STAFF POSITIONS. RICHARDS SAID EDUCATION AND AGRICULTURE SECTORS WERE ESPECIALLY TABOO;

B. RICHARDS SAID HE ATTEMPTED JULY 18 TO POINT OUT TO PRESIDENT THAT SEVERAL MINISTRIES, INCLUDING HIS OWN, WERE DEPENDEDNT ON KEY VOLUNTEERS. RICHARDS SAID PRESIDENT RELENTED TO EXTENT OF SAYING HE WOULD APPROVE ONLY THOSE VOLUNTEER APPOINTMENTS FOR WHICH MINISTERS WERE ABLE PERSONALLY TO
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PROVIDE CONVINCING JUSTIFICATION;

C. RICHARDS STATES THAT DURING FOREGOING CONVERSATION
PRESIDENT BANDA REMARKED, "AS FOR THE AMERICAN PEACE CORPS,
I KNOW THERE ARE CIA AGENTS AMONG THEM."

3. COMMENTS: RICHARDS IS LAST EXPATRIATE PERMSEC IN GOM.
HE HAS READY ACCESS TO PRESIDENT AND IN PAST HAS BEEN EXTREMELY
COOPERATIVE WITH EMBASSY. HIS INFORMATION HAS USUALLY BEEN
ACCURATE. HIS IDENTITY AS SOURCE SHOULD BE STRICTLY
PROTECTED.

4. ON JULY 16 PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR GRAY RECEIVED CALL FROM
MALAWI POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH SUMMONING HIM TO ZOMBA FOR
INTERVIEW. EMBASSY INFORMED SPECIAL BRANCH THAT MR. GRAY
WOULD NOT RESPOND. ON JULY 18 CHARGE INQUIRED OF CHIEF OF
SPECIAL BRANCH WHAT LATTER'S INTEREST WAS IN PCD GRAY.
SURPRISINGLY, SPECIAL BRANCH CHIEF REVEALED THAT MONITORING OF
PCD GRAY'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS HAD LED TO SUSPICIONS,
TO WIT:

A. REFERENCE GRAY MADE TO NEW PCV APPOINTEE (HOLLANDER)
WHOM GRAY DESCRIBED AS COMMUNICATIONS INSTRUCTOR WHO WOULD BE
BRINGING CERTAIN RADIO EQUIPMENT TO MALAWI WITH HIM; AND

B. REFERENCE GRAY MADE IN TELCON TO MALAWI EXILE PROLITICAL
PERSONALITY HENRY CHIPEMBERE.
CHARGE EXPLAINED TO SPECIAL BRANCH THAT HOLLANDER APPOINTMENT
WAS OPEN AND ABOVE BOARD AND THAT REFERENCE TO CHIPEMBERE WAS
PROBABLY SIMPLE MISPRONUCIATION OF SIMILIAR MALAWIAN NAME

(LATER CONFIRMED BY GRAY).

5. COMMENT: IF RICHARDS' INFORMATION IS ACCURATE, WE MAY BE
IN FOR FURTHER SLOWDOWN IN GOM APPROVALS OF NEW PCV'S, BASED
ON PREDICTABLE UNWILLINGNESS OF GOM MINISTERS TO TRY TO ARGUE
AGAINST PRESIDENT'S KNOWN BIASES. AS THERE HAVE BEEN NO
OUTRIGHT REFUSALS TO DATE, EMBASSY INTENDS TO CONTINUE WITH
SIMPLE, STRAIGHTFORWARD AND OPEN NEOTIATIONS ON INDIVIDUAL PCV
PLACEMENTS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS PATTERN OF ACCEPTANCES OR NON-
ACCEPTANCES APPEARS. ONLY OVERT SIGN SO FAR IS ANNOUNCED
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REQUIREMENT THAT ALL SUCH APPOINTMENTS MUST GO TO OFFICE OF
PRESIDENT FOR PRIOR APPROVAL.

6. AM UNABLE FULLY TO ACCOUNT FOR ALLEGED BANDA REMARK RE CIA
OR FOR INORDINATE SPECIAL BRANCH INTEREST IN GRAY. WE DO
KNOW THAT JOURNALISTIC EFFORTS OF FORMER MALAWI PCV PAUL
THEROUX LINKING PEACE CORPS AND CIA HAVE COME TO BANDA'S PERSONAL
ATTENTION. GENERAL SENSITIVITY OF GOM TO CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN

MISSION PERSONNEL IS WELL KNOWN AND HAS BEEN DOCUMENTED REGULARLY BY EMBASSY OVER PAST SEVERAL YEARS. IN ATTEMPTING EXPAND HIS PROGRAM, PCD GRAY HAS BEEN INDUSTRIOUS IN ESTABLISHING WIDE CONTACTS THROUGHTOUT GOM, PERHAPS MORE SO THAN ANY OTHER EMBASSY OFFICER; POSSIBLY THIS HAS ATTRACTED SUSPICION OF GOM SECURITY SERVICE. GRAY AGREES ON NEED FOR CIRCUMSPECTION IN ALL CONTACTS IN VIEW OF HIGH PROBABILITY BOTH CONTACTS AND TELCONS ARE MONITORED.

7. PCD GRAY HAS BEEN INFORMED OF ALL OF FOREGOING WITH EXCEPTION IDENTITY SOURCE OF INFO PARA TWO. HE ASKS THAT PC/W AFRICA DIRECTOR AND DESK OFFICER BE DISCREETLY BRIEFED ASAP. BY SEPTTEL HE PLANS DISCUSS PROBLEMS BEING ENCOUNTERED IN PLACEMENTS AND POSSIBLE CONTINGENCY PLANS SHOULD CERTAIN CURRENT VOLUNTEER APPLICANTS NOT BE APPROVED BY GOM.
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